



SINI 5 FOCUS!

Volume 1 Number 3

February 2011

Happy President's Day! I hope you're all planning to take time to refresh and relax over the next couple of weeks. I've found it a challenging winter, not so much for amount of snow or the degree of cold but for the stubborn persistence of both. Forecasters are predicting a slight "warm up" this week so I'm expecting my faith to be renewed that spring will in fact come. On the plus side, it's past 5:30 pm when the sky finally darkens. It's somehow energizing to walk to the car at the end of a busy day in the daylight!

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Time for a check-in

At the beginning of the year, I promised to get in touch with you midway through your restructuring implementation year. I'd like to schedule one-to-one calls with you over the next month to learn how things are going.

You've received and reviewed your fall 2010 NECAP results and, while we can't attribute any effects of your plan's strategies to those results because of the timing of our tests, it will provide a current view of your students' strengths and gaps.

My main interest is in learning how your "monitoring implementation" and



“monitoring effectiveness” strategies are working. The SINI 4 schools are preparing their restructuring plans and they could use advice on monitoring strategies and tools that you’ve found helpful. Keep that in mind as part of the agenda for our check-in.

Watch for an email from me with a few options for a call and let’s talk. You’re welcome to take the lead and send me your preferences for a half hour chat. Call or email with your request: karen.laba@ed.state.nh.us; (h) 603 743-5129; (c) 603 969-0988

Planning an April Meeting

In anticipation of your progress report on your restructuring activities due at the end of the year, I’d like to schedule a face to face meeting to give you the chance to share what you’ve learned and to get advice from other SINI 4+ schools on plans for next year. When we have our check-in, I’ll ask your preference for a date in April when we could take a morning in Concord to come together.

Here’s some options: April 4, 8, 11, 15, 28, 29. Let me know your availability and preferences when we talk.

What the SINI 4s are doing

The SINI 4 schools are completing their assessment of the rapid improvement indicators in the *Steps to Success* system. I thought you’d be interested in the recommendations they’ve received for how to make use of the assessment “data” from their review of the indicators in developing their plan. You can find a guidance document, *Moving from Assessing Indicators to Creating a Plan*, on the Department website, along with a recorded webinar on that same topic.

The recommendations in the guidance document will be familiar to some of you. I took what you shared about your experiences trying to craft a coherent plan using the results of your assessment of the indicators and outlined some activities to help the schools focus their attention on the essential practices that are most likely to lead to improved student achievement. I describe three transition steps: checking your work; clustering indicators; and drafting goal statements.

As part of that guidance document you’ll see the revisions to the template for the restructuring plan that makes better use of the capacity of the online *Steps to Success* tool. I’ve been working with the Title I staff at the Department and with the Steps developers at ADI/ CII to design forms that can capture essential information without having to go through the tedious copy-and-paste process you had to follow.

I've put together an example of a plan in the sample NH schools site for objective IIB04. Take a minute to log on to see what it looks like.

1. On the CII home page, select Indistar® login, enter nhschool and the password nhschool.
2. Once on the "Mt. Adams" site, go to the upper right corner and select REPORTING.
3. From the list of options for reports, select DETAILED REPORT OF OBJECTIVES INCLUDED IN THE PLAN.
4. Filter the list by team member – select Mary Ellen Lafreniere and click SUBMIT REQUEST. (the results will be only those objectives assigned to that team member)
5. You now have a view of two objectives assigned to "Mary Ellen Lafreniere" – IIB02 and IIB04. Notice how our "Mt. Adams" team has developed a detailed plan for IIB04 that will include activities for IIB02.

The advantage of schools putting their plans in the Steps system is that they can update their progress and use the tool to create progress reports for themselves, for the district, parents, community, or the Department as needed. It also allows the Department or district or any external provider to log in to check on progress in the plan's implementation. *Steps to Success* is designed to provide several layers of support to help schools achieve their goals, and keeping the plans within the system enables and encourages that support.

We'll take a closer look at the new plan format during our April meeting. I invite you to start thinking about making full use of *Steps to Success* as part of your "continuous improvement" process, whether or not you face accountability sanctions. Let's talk!

Pruning Lessons

Below is a recent posting from the Indistar blog. (Indistar is the generic name of *Steps to Success*.) The advice in the post is important for you as school leaders but even more important for your district to hear. Plans don't matter – no matter how well written – if the persons responsible for implementing the plan don't have sufficient "air" and "space" (i.e., time, expertise, etc) to implement the plan well. Please feel free to share this with others as you see fit. If you'd like to comment or add your thoughts, visit the blog at <http://indistar.blogspot.com>

Pruning Lessons

At this point in the winter, we in the frozen north like to raise our spirits by poring over garden magazines and seed catalogs as we anticipate the eventual coming of spring. An article in a recent issue of a popular home magazine features instructions on pruning, a task many gardeners approach with hesitation.

The article described the reasons for pruning – to remove dead wood, to neaten an unkempt shrub, and, most importantly, to open up the core of a bush to allow new growth to prosper. Modest and thoughtful pruning will let the plant show off its best features.

The authors explained that the first step in pruning is to ask, what is the gardener's desired outcome? What does the homeowner want the plant to look like when the pruning takes effect? The answer to that question leads the reader to the section describing where and when to make the pruning cuts to reach a particular result.

Is it just me, or do you also see the parallels between pruning a shrub and working on school improvement? The schools I'm coaching are facing some tough choices at this stage of their improvement process. They've completed a comprehensive assessment of current practices against the Indistar indicators. They've identified many practices they need to work on.

BUT they know they already have lots of commitments to other initiatives – a new math curriculum, professional learning communities, the second year of implementation of a response to intervention approach.

They also recognize they don't have the best "pruning" tools – namely the authority to stop, defer or suspend certain initiatives in order to FOCUS on the changes that their assessment has shown are foundational to their improvement targets.

It's the LEA who has that power – and that responsibility. It's also the SEA who can hold the LEA responsible for ensuring schools prune out the initiatives that have outlived their useful lives, to open up the space (i.e., time, energy, personnel) to allow new growth to get the air and light it needs to lead to dramatic improvement.

The pruning guide in the magazine makes another key point: it will take many months or even years for the pruned shrub to achieve its improved status. While some cuts will produce changes right away, others will take several seasons to produce the pleasing result the gardener imagines.

Isn't that our experience as educators? The initial launch of a change initiative – whether a stop or a start – triggers a pause in progress until the new focus is established. Once sufficient energy is aimed in the new direction, the pace of change speeds up, just like the pruned bush re-energizes and experiences a growth spurt.

The encouraging message of the pruning article is that "mistakes" are not irreversible – plants continually add new growth and can be redirected with careful attention through the next season. Schools who choose to adopt a continuous improvement approach to their work are patiently and persistently "pruning," nourishing and refining their work to better educate each unique student who enrolls.

What are your experiences encouraging schools to "prune" expired programs and thin out demanding commitments? Share your thoughts on this blog. Thanks, Karen

SINI 5 (restructuring implementation) Schools – Current Contact List

****PLUS SINI 4 and 5 "hold" schools (made AYP for the previous year; must make two years to exit SINI status)***

Here's the current list of SINI 4 hold and beyond schools as I have it. Let me know if any changes are needed.

SINI 4, 5, 6 Contacts Revised December 2010

SAU/ District	School	Principal Email
SINI 4 Hold (choosing to implement)		
#61 Farmington	Henry Wilson Memorial Tel: 603-755-2181	Jeffrey Keene jkeene@sau61.com Steve Woodward swoodward@sau61.com
#38 Hinsdale	Hinsdale Elementary Tel: 603 336-5332	Scott Lyman slyman@hnhdsd.org
#33 Raymond	Gove MS Tel: 603-895-3394	Ellen Small e.small@sau33.com
SINI 5 – Implementation		
#82 Chester	Chester Academy Tel: 603-887-3621 (X 145)	Leslie Leahy lesliel@chesteracademy.org Maggie Holm maggieh@chesteracademy.org
#11 Dover	Dover MS Tel: 603-516-7204	Christine Boston c.boston@doover.k12.nh.us
#18 Franklin	Bessie Rowell Tel: 603-934-5116	Kevin Barbour kbarbour@franklin.k12.nh.us Mike Hoyt mhoyt@franklin.k12.nh.us
#27 Litchfield	Griffin Memorial School Tel: 603-424-5931	Bo Schlichter bschlichter@litchfieldsd.org Ronda Gregg rgregg@litchfieldsd.org
#37 Manchester	Beech Street Elementary Tel: 603-624-6314	Ellie Murphy emurphy@mansd.org
#37 Manchester	Henry Wilson Elementary Tel: 603-624-6350	Linda Durand ldurand@mansd.org Christine Brennan cbrennan@mansd.org Stephanie Wheeler swheeler@mansd.org
#42 Nashua	Fairgrounds Elementary Tel: 603-594-4318	Chuck Healy healeyc@nashua.edu
#42 Nashua	Ledge Street Elementary Tel: 603-594-4337	Janet Valeri valerij@nashua.edu
#42 Nashua	Mt. Pleasant Elementary Tel: 603-594-4331	Mary Frances Tintle tintlem@nashua.edu
#43 Newport	Newport MS Tel: 603-863-2414	Barry Connell bconnell@newport.k12.nh.us
#64 Wakefield	Paul School Tel: 603 522-8891	Traci Lynn Moser tmoser@wakefield.k12.nh.us
#59 Winnisquam Regional	Winnisquam MS Tel: 603-286-7143	Pamela A. Miller pmiller@wrsdsau59.org Suzan Gannett sgannett@wrsdsau59.org
SINI 5 HOLD		
#34 Hillsboro Deering	Hillsboro Deering ES Tel: 603-464-1110	Noreen McAloon, Ed.D. nmcaloon@hdsd.k12.nh.us
SINI 6 -- Implementation		
#37 Manchester	Northwest Elementary Tel: 603-624-6321	Shelly Larochelle slarochelle@mansd.org

Please distribute this newsletter to your team members and others providing school improvement assistance to you. Send along suggestions for topics or requests for advice to help move your work forward. Celebrate the growing daylight! *Karen*

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